EDUCATING IN A GLOBAL ECONOMY

Preamble

1. Education is the key to participation in the global economy of the 21st century, based on technological revolutions in communications and transfer of information, as well as major changes in production, transport and distribution, and the economic value of knowledge. This global economy is based upon levels of mobility unprecedented in human history - mobility of information, of finance, of goods and services, and of people, but also mobility of disease, of crime, of arms and instruments of repression. Extremes of wealth and poverty within and among countries are greater than ever. In this new era with its opportunities and threats, each of the principal aims of Education International is more relevant than ever in seeking to build societies that are fair and just for all their citizens, that respect universal values of democracy and human rights, and whose development - social as well as economic - will be equitable and sustainable. In every country, this global economy seeks to permanently reduce the labour cost, and questions the right to education, and to qualification.

The development of quality higher education systems in developing countries (alongside the expansion of primary, secondary and vocational education) is an essential precondition for the training of the specialists needed for economic and social development, as well as for capacity-building within the education sector as a whole;

2. Education has always reflected and been influenced by changes in economy and society, while at the same time acting upon those changes. The relationship between education, economy and society is interactive. At a time of rapid and even fundamental changes in economy and society, there are great new challenges for education:
   • achieving Education for All;
   • making life-long learning a reality for all;
   • reaffirming the values of education in relation to personal development, the world of work and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship in democratic societies;
   • rethinking educational content and methods, taking into account the potential and the consequences of new technologies;
   • recruiting enough qualified people to work in the education sector;
   • defining the key role of the teacher as a specialist in the provision and management of learning opportunities;
   • interacting with a broader spectrum of partners, parents and local communities, trade unions and enterprises, and non-governmental organisations;

3. There are also threats to education arising out of the global economy:
   • commercialisation of educational services, with consequent risks of inequity, discrimination and deepening of the digital divide;
   • non-respect for diversity of culture, traditions and languages;
   • introduction, under the guise of ‘reform’, of a ‘culture of enterprise’ based on self-interest, with the consequent risk of undermining the ethical values of education and of the teaching profession;
   • decreasing attention to the values underlying democracy, and increasing attention to the values of competition and the market;
   • short-sighted solutions to the new challenges, such as hiring unqualified people or draining teachers from the south towards the north;
   • changes in the role of the State, with more emphasis on regulation and less on guarantees of equity and non-discrimination;
4. Huge public funds are being released to encourage the development of on-line education, and the promise of an education via new technologies is being used as an excuse to deny legitimate claims regarding the building or the upgrading of schools and the recruitment of new teachers and personnel of all categories.

More and more students are deprived of their right to study, as they are compelled to follow electronic courses and watch video-conferences instead of following regular courses. University institutions are trying to seize teachers’ intellectual property rights and plan to sell their courses to other universities, to business and to individual buyers. This leads to the privatisation of schools and to the emergence of specialised firms;

The Third World Congress of Education International, meeting in Jomtien, Thailand, from 25 to 29 July, 2001:

calls on all Governments:
- to draw up national action plans by December 2002 for Education For All, using transparent and democratic processes based on the development and improvement of a public education service, involving the various partners, particularly education unions, parents, students and NGOs active in the education sector;
- ratify and implement the ILO Convention adopted in June 1999 forbidding the worst forms of child labour, for the purpose of bringing a definitive end to all forms of exploitation of children;
- endeavour to concretely implement the decisions of the Jomtien and Dakar conferences on Education For All;
- to establish consultative processes with partners in educational reform;
- to take steps, in close consultation with education unions, for the recruitment of sufficient qualified teachers and other educational personnel;
- to enter into negotiations with education unions in order to upgrade the status of the teaching profession;
- to take the necessary political decisions to ensure adequate funding of education at all levels, with a minimum allocation of 6 percent of Gross National Product (GNP);
- to establish a tax on financial transactions (Tobin tax) in order to fight against financial speculation and instability while finding new funds for the education systems in developing countries;

Calls on member countries of the OECD:
- to implement the proposals of the G8 Summits and complete them in order to obtain the writing off of the debt of the least developed countries, on the understanding that resources so saved will be re-allocated by those countries to education and health;
- to raise levels of official development assistance to 0.7 percent of GNP, and to give priority to assistance in achieving the goals of the education for all campaign, as well as basic health measures for all families;
- to give special attention to cooperative teacher education programs in developing countries, and to respect the interests of those countries when recruiting teachers;

Calls on the United Nations, its specialised agencies and programs, and other intergovernmental agencies
- to coordinate their efforts towards achievement of the goals of the Declaration of Dakar - Education For All before the year 2015;
- to take advantage of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio+10, Johannesburg 2002) to emphasise basic education as the main tool for confronting worldwide problems such as environmental degradation, demographic growth and “consumerist” waste;
• to act in order to take, as quickly as possible, within the Kyoto protocol framework, concrete and constraining measures submitted to effective monitoring mechanisms;
• to mobilise the efforts of the international community so as to raise the resources necessary for the attainment of these goals;
• to respect, throughout the UN systems and other intergovernmental agencies, the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work;
• to work with the trade union movement, business and organisations of civil society on issues arising from the erosion of national tax bases and new approaches to financing global needs in a global economy;
• to give priority to balanced investment in all levels of education without resort to redistribution of funds from one educational sector to another;

Congress recommends that EI and its member organisations:
• maintain the campaign for quality public education for all, in cooperation with its non-governmental and inter-governmental partners, and the campaign against child labour;
• take all the initiatives at the national, regional and international levels to defend and improve the public education system, thereby guaranteeing the pedagogical freedom of the teacher according to the 1966 UNESCO/ILO Recommendation and the rights of the young and adults to a basic and lifelong quality education, and that they be interlocutors recognised by the political leadership in the field of education;
• advocate through interventions to intergovernmental agencies and national governments, and campaigns directed at public opinion, a concept of education based on quality provision for all by qualified and motivated educators, and the personal development of free men and women able to contribute to society, not merely units of production;
• oppose in principle the commodification of education and research services by the WTO and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and monitor closely any moves to apply the GATS to education and research services and mobilise against such moves in appropriate ways, including campaigns directed at public opinion;
• give particular attention to the issue of teacher recruitment and related issues of the status of the teaching profession;
• share research and information on conditions and trends in education and teaching;
• undertake an analysis of the impact of the global economy on copyright and related issues of intellectual property affecting teachers, as well as standards of educational materials, including educational software, and respect for cultural diversity;
• promote continuing solidarity among the member organisations of Education International, through development and emergency assistance, mobilisation against violations of human and trade union rights, and the extension of information and communication technology;
• give high priority to enhancing the activism of member organisations to enable them to respond to the threats to public education posed by neo-liberal economic and education policies being pursued by global institutions such as the World Bank, IMF and WTO. New programs are urgently needed for development with human and labour rights and the public provision of high quality community services such as education.
• develop the key role which EI can play in assisting member organisations to campaign more effectively through activities which educate and mobilise members and which support them in building alliances with NGOs and other community movements which share the objectives of EI;
• focus attention on the key demand to exclude education and other basic social services from agreements which national governments may reach in the framework of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), or bilateral and regional trade agreements.